

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims, including those in the First Preliminary Amendment, in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A tantalum sputtering target manufactured by subjecting a molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to plastic working such as forging, annealing and rolling, ~~wherein the structure of the said tantalum sputtering target comprises having~~ a non-recrystallized structure.

Claim 2 (original): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 1, wherein the non-recrystallized structure is 20% or more.

Claim 3 (original): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 1, wherein the non-recrystallized structure is 40% or more.

Claims 4-6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (currently amended): A method of manufacturing ~~method of~~ a tantalum sputtering target comprising ~~a non-recrystallized structure by the steps of~~ subjecting a molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to ~~processes such as~~ forging, annealing and rolling processes, ~~wherein and performing~~ plastic working ~~is ultimately performed thereto on said ingot or billet to provide the tantalum sputtering target with~~ a non-recrystallized structure.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A method of manufacturing ~~method~~ of a tantalum sputtering target comprising ~~a non-recrystallized structure by the steps of~~ subjecting a molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to processes such as forging, annealing and rolling, wherein, after the ultimate performing a plastic working process on the ingot or billet, this is further subject to and thereafter annealing the ingot or billet at a temperature of 1173K or less.

Claims 9-12 (canceled).

Claim 13 (new): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 3, wherein said tantalum sputtering target has a Vickers hardness of 90 or more.

Claim 14 (new): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 1, wherein said tantalum sputtering target has a Vickers hardness of 90 or more.

Claim 15 (new): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 1, wherein said tantalum sputtering target has a Vickers hardness of 100 or more.

Claim 16 (new): A tantalum sputtering target according to claim 1, wherein said tantalum sputtering target has a Vickers hardness of 125 or more.

Claim 17 (new): The method according to claim 7, wherein, after said plastic working, said ingot or billet is subjected to finish processing to from a target shape.

Claim 18 (new): The method according to claim 7, wherein said annealing is recrystallization annealing, and wherein said forging and recrystallization annealing processes are repeated two or more times.

Claim 19 (new): The method according to claim 7, wherein extend forging and upset forging are repeatedly performed on the ingot or billet.

Claim 20 (new): The method according to claim 7, wherein said annealing is recrystallization annealing, and wherein said recrystallization annealing is performed at a temperature of between a recrystallization temperature of the ingot or billet and 1673K.

Claim 21 (new): The method according to claim 8, wherein, after said plastic working process or after said step of annealing at 1173K or less, said ingot or billet is subjected to finish processing to from a target shape.

Claim 22 (new): The method according to claim 21, wherein during said step of subjecting the molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to forging, annealing and rolling, said annealing is recrystallization annealing, and said forging and recrystallization annealing processes are repeated two or more times.

Claim 23 (new): The method according to claim 22, wherein extend forging and upset forging are repeatedly performed on the ingot or billet.

Claim 24 (new): The method according to claim 23, wherein said recrystallization annealing is performed at a temperature of between a recrystallization temperature of the ingot or billet and 1673K.

Claim 25 (new): The method according to claim 8, wherein during said step of subjecting the molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to forging, annealing and rolling, said annealing is recrystallization annealing, and said forging and recrystallization annealing processes are repeated two or more times.

Claim 26 (new): The method according to claim 8, wherein extend forging and upset forging are repeatedly performed on the ingot or billet.

Claim 27 (new): The method according to claim 8, wherein during said step of subjecting the molten and cast tantalum ingot or billet to forging, annealing and rolling, said annealing is recrystallization annealing performed at a temperature of between a recrystallization temperature of the ingot or billet and 1673K.